

# Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement

Institutions will wish to evaluate their PDP framework(s) in a spirit of continuous enhancement. This might include obtaining feedback from students, staff and external parties such as programme reviewers, external examiners, learned societies, accrediting bodies and employers. Ideally, those providing feedback should be informed of changes made or planned as a result of their comments.

## Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

### Evaluation and review

- C1 What opportunities are there for students to provide feedback on the PDP framework(s) and to shape the PDP strategy?
- C2 What opportunities are there for staff to provide feedback on the PDP framework(s)?
- C3 How and when are staff and students informed about changes made as a result of their feedback?
- C4 How are external examiners asked to comment on the PDP framework(s)?
- C5 How is consideration of PDP embedded within annual or periodic module or programme review procedures?
- C6 If relevant, what is the nature of appraisal of the PDP framework(s) by review teams for accrediting PSBs?
- C7 How and when is PDP considered by appropriate committees with responsibility for learning and teaching?

### Quality enhancement

- C8 What mechanisms exist within the institution for sharing good practice in PDP?
- C9 In what ways are staff development events used to promote and support PDP?
- C10 Where relevant, how are links made with the CPD systems offered by representative employers? [See also Aspect M: linking PDP and continuing professional development, page 63.]
- C11 How do staff with responsibility for PDP administration and development cross-reference or benchmark internal developments with those elsewhere (for example, by attending sectoral meetings and seminars)?
- C12 How have institutional developments been reported externally (for example, as case studies available from the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) or via HEA Subject Centre activity)?

- C13 How have institutional PDP developments been reported in the educational or pedagogical literature for HE (for example, in discipline-focused teaching journals)?
- C14 In what ways might PDP developments in disciplines be recognised via institutional teaching reward schemes?

## Commentary

The principles of effective practice from the QAA *Personal development planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice* (2009), quoted in Aspect A: strategy and planning for implementation, page 12, imply an institutional focus on monitoring and quality enhancement in relation to PDP, including evaluation of the student experience. The expectation is clearly that an institution's policy and strategy in relation to PDP, the way in which this has been implemented, and above all, student views, should all be subject to review and consequential improvement.

### Role of external review and institutional reflective analysis

In Scotland, the Government's mechanism for assuring the quality of HE provision (managed via QAA Scotland) is Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR). While PDP is not mentioned explicitly in the second edition of the ELIR Handbook (QAA, 2008) it is likely to be covered within institutional reflective analysis. Within review team reports, it might then be considered within Section 2, Management of the student learning experience, under the topics

- effectiveness of the institution's approach to engaging and supporting students in their learning
- effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting the development of graduate attributes, including those relating to employability, in all of its students.

For the institutional audit of HEIs relevant to England and Northern Ireland, PDP falls explicitly within Section 3, Institutional management of learning opportunities, QAA, 2006a), while for the institutional review relevant to HEIs in Wales it might be covered via the mechanism of thematic trails as selected by the review team (QAA, 2003).

PSBs may also examine the effectiveness of PDP provision via their accreditation process.

An example of a PSB with a long-standing interest in PDP is the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), which accredits over 100 courses in 29 UK universities. Chartered membership of the RTPI for graduates requires the completion of an advanced professional competence log book and new licentiates are expected to compose a professional development plan as part of a general emphasis on CPD within the profession. This ethos is expected to be reflected in analogous arrangements within accredited degree programmes and is scrutinised as part of the accreditation process.

Thus, the RTPI *Policy Statement on Initial Planning Education* (RTPI, 2008) suggests that town planning schools and their degree programmes should foster what should be 'the first stage in what should be a life-long programme of development and acquisition of knowledge and skills', and the Institute's Indicative Learning Outcome 19

states that students should: 'Appreciate the meaning of professionalism...and the importance of a commitment to lifelong learning to maintain and expand professional competence'. There is no prescription regarding method, but in many cases schools adopt some form of PDP as a methodology.

### **Internal review**

HEIs are expected to adhere to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA, in relation to assurance of academic standards and quality. Although institutions have a degree of autonomy in how this is interpreted, the precepts of *Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review (QAA, 2006b)* provide guidance on mechanisms that might be used, which include:

- programme and/or module approval processes
- programme and/or module monitoring processes
- internal programme (subject) reviews
- student feedback and evaluation as part of the above.

It is natural that PDP framework(s) and its/their implementation will be covered in the above processes as part of review of the student learning experience and in reviews of related institutional processes concerning the evaluation of progress with institutional and discipline strategy and planning (see Aspect A: strategy and planning for implementation, page 12).

### **Quality enhancement**

PDP has featured in a number of QAA Scotland Quality Enhancement Themes and projects these have initiated, for example:

- The Employability Theme: the paper *Employability: Effective learning and employability (QAA Scotland, 2007)*
- The First Year Theme: the report on *Personal Development Planning in the first year (Miller et al, 2008)*.

Graduate attributes are a central component of the Research-Teaching Linkages Quality Enhancement Theme and the role of PDP in reflecting on attributes and skills and in recording/evidencing achievement in this area is obvious (see Aspect L: employability and employment, page 60).

### **Tools to assist in evaluating PDP frameworks and their implementation**

As to methods of evaluation of PDP implementation, two important guides have been published by the CRA (Baume, 2007; Peters, 2007). These were produced in parallel and offer different approaches based on the authors' disciplinary backgrounds and evaluation experience. Baume (2007) cites four reasons to conduct an evaluation:

- 1 to account for resources committed and outcomes attained
- 2 to understand why the venture is having the effects that it is having
- 3 to improve this and future such ventures
- 4 to develop the capacity of the venture to monitor and evaluate its own practice.

and provides 26 key questions to provide an evaluation strategy for a PDP 'venture'. Peters (2007) structures his guidance around 11 issues:

- Why evaluate now?
- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- What is the audience for the evaluation?
- Who carries out the evaluation?
- What is the focus of the proposed evaluation?
- What is the scope and scale of the evaluation?
- What is the methodology of the proposed evaluation?
- What are the appropriate methods for collecting evaluation data?
- What other evaluation design issues should be addressed?
- How can the data be analysed?
- What are the issues in presenting the results of evaluations?

and within these headings provides 44 'evaluation guidance questions'. His resource also includes examples of evaluation tools with rationales.